



Charles County Department of Emergency Services STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 401 - General Emergency Operations

General Emergency Operations - 401.00		
S.O.P. # 401.11	Handling of Service Animals	PAGE: 1 OF 2
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401.11.01 Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to establish standards for the definition of service animals according to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and proper handling of service animals during emergency service calls.

401.11.02 Cited References

1. U.S. Department of Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
2. ADA Frequently Asked Questions: https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.html
3. Maryland Annotated Code: Human Services Article 7, Subtitle 7-701 through 7-705

401.11.03 Definitions

1. **Service Animal** - A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Beginning on March 15, 2011, only dogs are recognized as service animals under titles II and III of the ADA.
2. **Work or Tasks of a Service Animal** - The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties.
3. **"Under Control"** - Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
4. **Support, Therapy, Comfort or Companion Animals** - These terms are used to describe animals that provide comfort just by being with a person. Because they have not been trained to perform a specific job or task, they do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.



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401.11.04 Handling of Service Animals

1. **Determining if a dog is a service animal** - According to the ADA, crew members may ask only two (2) specific questions:

- a. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- b. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Crews are not allowed to request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability (except to perform medical treatment for the patient). The ADA does not require service animals to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.

2. **Transport of a service animal in an ambulance** - The service animal must be allowed to ride in the ambulance if the patient which the service animal is assigned is being transported. However, if the space in the ambulance is crowded and the dog's presence would interfere with the emergency medical staff's ability to treat the patient, crew members should make other arrangements to have the dog transported to the hospital. Additionally, the patient must be able to control the service animal. If the patient is unresponsive or has altered mental status, crew members should make other arrangements to have the dog transported to the hospital.
3. **Safe transport of a service animal in an ambulance** - When transporting a patient with a service animal, every effort should be made to do so in a safe manner for the patient, the animal and the crew members. If possible, the animal should be secured in some manner in order to prevent injury to either the animal or the crew during transport. Safe transport devices may include:
 - a. Crates, cages, specialty carriers.
 - b. Seatbelts or passenger restraints using a specialized harness or seat belt attachments.
4. **Alternate transport of service animals** - If it has been determined that a service animal will interfere with the medical treatment of the patient or the service animal is unable to be controlled by the patient:
 - a. Crew members should attempt to find a family member who is able to transport the service animal in their private vehicle OR,
 - b. Crew members should contact Communications and request Animal Control for transportation of the service animal to the destination hospital.